

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-15

USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-15 A-01 SCA-01 DRC-01 /123 W

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R 020536Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1753

INFO CINCPAC

CINCPACREP CANBERRA

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: PP, PGOV

SUBJ: OUTLOOK IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA AS SELF-GOVERNMENT
APPROACHES

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: PRESENT ATMOSPHERE IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA, AS FORMAL RECOGNITION OF SELF-GOVERNMENT ON DEC 1 COMES CLOSER, IS ONE OF CAUTIOUS CONFIDENCE IN FUTURE, ON PART OF BOTH AUSTRALIAN OFFICIALS IN TERRITORY, AS WELL AS PAPUA NEW GUINEAN LEADERS. OCCASIONAL DISTURBANCES AND TRIBAL CLASHES IN PAST YEAR HAVE BEEN SPORADIC IN CHARACTER, LIMITED IN EXTENT, AND HAVE CAUSED FEW CASUALTIES AND LITTLE PROPERTY DAMAGE. THERE IS CONSIDERABLE INTEREST AMONG PNG OFFICIALS IN OPENING OF AMERICAN CONSULATE IN PORT MORESBY.

ACTION REQUESTED: THAT DEPARTMENT INDICATE PROSPECTS FOR EARLY ACTION ON OPENING CONSULATE. END SUMMARY.

2. POLCOUNS VISITED PAPUA NEW GUINEA SEPT 16-26.
CONFIDENCE AND STEADY PREPARATION FOR UNFAMILIAR
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SERIES OF EVENTS LEADING TO INDEPENDENCE MARK POLITICAL

ATMOSPHERE IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA AT PRESENT TIME. THERE IS SOME CONCERN OVER WHAT FUTURE WILL BRING AND LINGERING WORRY ON PART OF A NUMBER OF PAPUA NEW GUINEAN OFFICIALS THAT SELF-GOVERNMENT ON DEC 1 MAY BE FOLLOWED BY MASS EXODUS OF AUSTRALIANS IN ALL WALKS OF LIFE, TO DETRIMENT OF PROPER FUNCTIONING OF POLITICAL, ADMINISTRATIVE, AND ECONOMIC LIFE OF COUNTRY. AUSTRALIAN PRESS OVER PAST SEVERAL MONTHS HAS GREATLY EXAGGERATED DIMENSIONS OF PROBLEMS OF TRANSITION, WHICH ARE PRIMARILY PSYCHOLOGICAL IN NATURE.

3. JUDGED BY STATEMENTS RECENTLY MADE IN THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY IN PORT MORESBY AND IN CONVERSATIONS WITH POLCOUNS ELSEWHERE IN COUNTRY, PAPUA NEW GUINEANS ARE PREDOMINANTLY CONSERVATIVE PEOPLE WHO WILL APPROACH FUTURE CHANGE WITH CAUTION. DESPITE OCCASIONAL FLAREUPS OF VIOLENCE IN SCATTERED AREAS OF PNG, CASUALTIES HAVE BEEN RELATIVELY FEW, PROPERTY DAMAGE HAS NOT BEEN EXTENSIVE, AND THERE IS NO LARGE-SCALE INTERNAL SECURITY PROBLEM IN SIGHT AT PRESENT, THOUGH LOCAL DISTURBANCES COULD STRETCH POLICE RESOURCES. EXTREMIST ORGANIZATIONS AND GROUPS ARE A FEW IN NUMBER AND APPEAR TO POSSESS LITTLE INFLUENCE AMONG POPULATION AS A WHOLE.

4. THE PAPUA NEW GUINEA GOVERNMENT, IN OFFICE SINCE APRIL, 1972, HAS SO FAR MAINTAINED A PRECARIOUS COALITION OF MINORITY PARTIES BY NOT PRESSING DIVISIVE ISSUES BUT BY MOVING STEADILY TO DEVELOP AS BROAD A CONSENSUS AS POSSIBLE ON SPECIFIC PROBLEMS. SEQUENCE OF EVENTS OVER NEXT YEAR OR SO WILL PROBABLY BE AS FOLLOWS: AUSTRALIA WILL FORMALLY RECOGNIZE PAPUA NEW GUINEA AS SELF-GOVERNING ON DEC 1, 1973, RESERVING CONTROL OF DEFENSE AND FOREIGN RELATIONS. IN FACT, WITH A PAPUA NEW GUINEAN (ALBERT MAORI KIKI) AS MINISTER FOR FOREIGN RELATIONS AND TRADE AS WELL AS DEFENSE, IT IS INCONCEIVABLE THAT AUSTRALIA WILL TAKE ANY MAJOR DECISIONS ON EITHER FOREIGN AFFAIRS OR DEFENSE AFFECTING TERRITORY WITHOUT CAREFUL COORDINATION WITH ELECTED PNG GOVERNMENT. IN EVERY SIGNIFICANT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SENSE PNG GOVERNMENT IS ALREADY FULLY SELF-GOVERNING AND HAS THE SUBSTANCE OF INDEPENDENCE IN ITS HANDS. DEC 1, 1973, WILL SIMPLY BE A DATE ON WHICH PRESENT REALITIES ARE FORMALLY RECOGNIZED.

5. SOME TIME EARLY IN 1974 (PERHAPS AS EARLY AS FEBRUARY) THE PNG CONSTITUTIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE WILL COMPLETE ITS PRESENT HEARINGS AND WILL TABLE IN

THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY A DRAFT CONSTITUTION. PERHAPS
THE MOST DELICATE ISSUE REMAINING TO BE RESOLVED IN
THE CONSTITUTION WILL BE THE TERMS FOR SHARING GOVERN-
MENT REVENUES BETWEEN THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT AND DISTRICT
GOVERNMENTS. THIS COULD BE A CRITICAL ISSUE IN AREAS
SUCH AS BOUGAINVILLE, WHERE SEPARATISM HAS BEEN OPENLY
ADVOCATED IN PAST. HOWEVER, ASSURANCE OF SIGNIFICANT
REVENUES TO DISTRICT GOVERNMENTS MAY WELL RESULT IN
EARLY ACTION TO ADOPT CONSTITUTION. DATE OF ADOPTION
OF CONSTITUTION WILL BE MAJOR LANDMARK AND WILL BECOME
FUTURE NATIONAL DAY OF PNG.

6. HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY WILL FORMALLY REQUEST AUSTRALIA
TO RECOGNIZE PNG AS INDEPENDENT STATE SOME TIME IN
1974, WITH BOTH PNG GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION FIGURES

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PREDICTING THIS WILL TAKE PLACE BETWEEN JUNE AND
SEPTEMBER, 1974. GOVERNMENT OF AUSTRALIA IS ON RECORD
AS PROMISING TO ACCEDE TO SUCH REQUEST WHEN IT IS MADE,
ALTHOUGH NO SPECIFIC DATE IS AVAILABLE. GOA
ACTION UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES COULD NOT BE LONG
DELAYED. THERE IS NO SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN

GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION IN PNG ON WHETHER TO MOVE TO INDEPENDENCE. OPPOSITION UNITED PARTY (WHICH HAS ABOUT 41 VOTES IN 100-MEMBER HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY) IS MORE CONSERVATIVE IN ORIENTATION THAN GOVERNMENT, WHICH IS LED BY PANGU PARTY AND COALITION OF SMALL PARTIES AND INDEPENDENTS. AS LEADING FIGURE IN UNITED PARTY, RON NEVILLE (PROSPEROUS AUSTRALIAN EXPATRIATE WHO IS PROMINENT BUSINESS FIGURE IN SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS NEAR MENDE), TOLD EMBOFF SEPT 20, OPPOSITION DOES NOT OPPOSE INDEPENDENCE. IT WANTS TO HAVE A PERIOD OF ABOUT SIX MONTHS OF SELF-GOVERNMENT BEFORE INDEPENDENCE TO MAKE PNG GOVERNMENT REALIZE SIZE AND EXTENT OF PROBLEMS IT FACES.

7. DESPITE SCARE STORIES IN AUSTRALIAN PRESS ON EXODUS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OF AUSTRALIAN BUSINESS AND ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL, AIRCRAFT FLYING FROM AUSTRALIA TO PNG CONTINUE TO BE FULL, AND MOST AUSTRALIANS IN THE TERRITORY SEEM TO BY STAYING PUT. SENIOR DFA REPRESENTATIVE IN PNG, MR. M.L. LYON (DEPUTY AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER IN SINGAPORE UNTIL ASSUMING PRESENT POST IN APRIL, 1973), TOLD EMOFF THAT THERE ARE CURRENTLY ABOUT 45,000 AUSTRALIANS RESIDENT IN PNG. AFTER INDEPENDENCE THIS NUMBER IS EXPECTED TO DECLINE TO ABOUT 35,000 AND STABILIZE AT THAT LEVEL.

8. CHIEF MINISTER SOMARE HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY ANNOYED AT CONTINUING PREDICTIONS OF DISASTER IN AUSTRALIAN PRESS. IN PRESS STATEMENT SEPT 26 HE SAID THAT QTE DURING THE PAST YEAR THE PEOPLE OF PAPUA NEW

GUINEA HAVE SUFFERED A STREAM OF BLATANT INSULTS. PEOPLE FROM OTHER COUNTRIES (READ AUSTRALIA) HAVE BEEN PREDICTING UNIMAGINABLE CATASTROPHES FOR OUR COUNTRY, AS WE STAND LESS THAN THREE MONTHS FROM SELF-GOVERNMENT. IT IS AN OLD PATTERN AND REPRESENTS THE INABILITY OF 'DEVELOPED CIVILIZATION' TO BELIEVE THAT, BECAUSE OUR COUNTRY AND OUR PEOPLE ARE DIFFERENT, WE CAN MAKE IT WORK IN OUR OWN WAY. BUT FOR ALL THAT, IT IS NO LESS IRRITATING TO BE CONSTANTLY WARNED OF IMPENDING DISASTER. END QTE. AFTER ACKNOWLEDGING GREAT DEAL REMAINS TO BE DONE, HE CONCLUDED, QTE WHEN IN THE FUTURE AN INDEPENDENT PNG HAS PROVED ITSELF TO THE WORLD, IT WILL GIVE ME GREAT PLEASURE TO REMIND THOSE WHO PREDICTED TROUBLE, OF THEIR WORDS IN 1973. END QTE. SOMARE REMAINS REASONABLE AND UNDERSTANDING IN HIS ATTITUDE TO AUSTRALIANS IN PNG AND HAS BEEN GIVEN HIGH MARKS BY OPPOSITION, BOTH PUBLICLY AND IN PRIVATE,

FOR HIS ABILITY, SINCERITY, AND INTEGRITY OF PURPOSE.

9. GOOD WILL TO U.S. IS WIDESPREAD THROUGHOUT PNG, WITH BOTH GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION FIGURES EXPRESSING INTEREST IN EARLY OPENING OF AMERICAN CONSULATE IN PORT MORESBY. BRITISH AND INDONESIAN CONSULATES ALREADY IN PLACE IN PORT MORESBY. MINISTER FOR FINANCE JULIUS CHAN TOLD EMBOFF SEPT 24 HE WANTED TO DEVELOP LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TRADE BETWEEN U.S. AND PNG, WHILE OTHER PNG FIGURES INDICATED A RECEPTIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS U.S. INVESTMENT IN COUNTRY.

10. EMBASSY CONSIDERS THAT, WHILE PNG FACES SUBSTANTIAL PROBLEMS IN ORGANIZING ITSELF FOR SELF-GOVERNMENT AND INDEPENDENCE, PRESENT ATMOSPHERE OF CONFIDENCE IS GOOD AUGURY FOR FUTURE. PNG LEADERS ARE GOING ABOUT THEIR TASKS IN SERIOUS AND MODERATE WAY AND HAVE GOOD CHANCE TO BRING COUNTRY THROUGH DIFFICULT TRANSITION PERIOD AND INTO STABLE AND CONTINUING GROWTH.
GREEN

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